

ALL ABOUT STRAW-BERRIES

NEW YORK CITY has the longest strawberry season of any city in the world. Berries begin to appear here early in January and sometimes during the Christmas holidays, and from that time until near the end of July they may always be found in market.

The very first strawberries are raised in hothouses up the Hudson and by growers near Boston.

Florida strawberries are quite plentiful in market early in February, and before the end of February South Carolina and Georgia strawberries are being hawked about the streets. Next come the Maryland and Delaware berries; then the Jersey, and last of all the New York State strawberry, fresh and delicious.

The best strawberry ever brought to or sold in New York is the Hackensack berry. It is the nearest approach to the field berry ever seen here. The Hackensack berries are grown in broad, sunny fields, and are cultivated as little as possible, thus retaining all the lusciousness and delicacy of flavor of the wild berry.

The Hackensack berries are stemmed and hulled as they are picked, and are placed in small, white earthen bowls, in which they are brought to New York. The season of the Hackensack berry lasts only two days, and so rare are they and so highly prized that generally they are all bought before they reach the uptown markets.

Just now strawberries are so plentiful and inexpensive that all families in moderate circumstances can afford to serve them in some form once or twice daily.

Of course the most perfect way to serve a strawberry is that which is nearest nature. In England strawberries are served with the stems on, just as they are picked from the beds, piled in tempting little mounds in crisp lettuce or cabbage leaves. A dish of powdered sugar is served with the berries, and one by one you dip the berries in the sugar and eat them.

The great American dish of strawberries and cream is unknown in England.

The moment a strawberry is cooked it loses its flavor. There are, however, a few ways of serving strawberries, without heating them, by which they retain their flavor.

The best of all dishes known to culinary art made with strawberries is the **STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE**. I do not refer to the celluloid production of the nineteenth century confectioners displayed in bake shop windows and on lunch counters, composed of dry and tasteless sponge cake and a few sour strawberries and ornamented with a white foam called whipped cream. I mean the strawberry shortcake of our grandmothers—the very thought of which makes our mouths water; a dish so rich and luscious that with it nothing can compare.

A genuine old-fashioned strawberry shortcake is a meal of itself—so rich and satisfying that really one can eat nothing else. This is the way to make it:

Put a quart of sifted flour in a large earthen bowl. Add to the flour a half-teaspoonful of salt and three heaping teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Stir the salt and baking powder well through the flour. Next put two heaping tablespoonfuls of nice sweet butter in the flour, and with the tips of the fingers work the butter well through the flour. When this is done pour in enough rich milk to make a soft dough. Now put your pastry board on the table and dust it well with flour. Next get a good, big baking pan, a square one, for this is to be an old-fashioned, four-cornered shortcake. Rub a little flour in the pan to keep the dough from sticking. Now sift a little flour over the dough. Take it out of the bowl. Put it on the moulding board. Dust the rolling pin with flour. Lightly roll the dough out as near the shape of the baking pan as possible. Roll it to the thickness of an inch and a half. Put it in the pan and stand it in rather a quick oven and let it bake from eighteen to twenty minutes. As soon as it is done remove the cake from the oven and turn it out of the pan on a thickly folded linen cloth. When the cake has cooled a little take a long, thin-bladed, very sharp knife and split the cake carefully in halves. Lay one half with the crust side down on a deep platter. Quickly spread the top of the cake with butter. Set the platter and the other half of the crust in a cool place while you prepare the fruit.

Pick over carefully two quarts of perfectly ripe, fine strawberries. If they are at all dusty or sandy put them in a large colander, fill a big pan with cold water; sink the colander in the water two or three times—this will remove all sand or dust. Let the berries drain for a few moments in the colander. Then put a little more than half of them in an earthen bowl and cover them with fine sugar. It is not possible to tell just the amount of sugar, for that depends on the sweetness of the berry. One must be guided by some judgment in this.

After the sugar is on the berries take a potato masher and lightly crush the berries. Do not mash them to a pulp—just crush them.

After they are crushed and well mingled with the sugar, spread them over the half of the cake on the platter, juice and all.

Now place the other half of the cake on top of the crushed berries, crust side up.

Next take the uncrushed berries that remain in the colander and range them nicely on top of the crust and round the cake on the platter.

Pour a quart of rich cream over the top layer of berries and sprinkle the whole quite bountifully with fine sugar.

Trim the edge of the platter prettily with strawberry leaves and serve the shortcake at once.



STRAWBERRY BAVAROIS.

Oscar Tschirky, maitre d'hotel of the Waldorf, gives the following excellent recipe for strawberry bavaois: Take one quart of freshly picked and thoroughly ripe strawberries; mash them with four tablespoonfuls of finely powdered sugar and pass them through a rather fine sieve. Put this puree into a china basin until wanted. Now dissolve one and one-half ounces of fine isinglass in a pan with a gill of warm water; add one-half a pound of fine sugar, and when this is all dissolved add the juice of an orange and twenty drops of lemon juice. Pass the gelatine through a sieve and keep stirring it as it gets cold, adding the puree of strawberries gradually. Place it on the ice, and as the mixture thickens mix with it four tablespoonfuls of rich whipped cream.

Stand the dish containing this in a large freezer; pack it round with chopped ice and cover the dish tightly. Let it remain in the ice till frapped. When ready to serve fill cut glass cups with the bavaois and ornament the top with whipped cream prepared as follows:

To a pint of rich cream add four heaping tablespoonfuls of fine sugar, the juice of one large lemon and a tablespoonful of thick gelatine made from isinglass. Whip the cream after these ingredients are in till it is stiff and then add it to the top of the bavaois.

STRAWBERRY ICE CREAM.

Pick over carefully one quart of perfectly ripe strawberries. Wash them free of sand. Put them in a large bowl. Cover them with one pound of fine sugar and crush them with a wooden masher. Stir the sugar well through the berries. Add one pint and a half of rich sweet cream and a teaspoonful of vanilla extract. Stir all these ingredients well together. Then pour them into a freezer. Pack the freezer in ice, following these directions: Have a large tub with holes in the bottom, so the water may run off as the ice melts. Put a layer of chopped ice in the bottom of the tub and sprinkle over it a handful of rock salt. Set the freezer on this layer of ice and then begin filling up the space with layers of ice and sprinklings of salt, pounding it all down with a wooden masher. Fill the tub up to within an inch of the cover of the freezer. After the freezer has stood in the packed ice about five minutes begin to turn the crank. After ten minutes remove the cover of the freezer, and with a silver-bladed knife cut the cream from the sides of the freezer. Repeat this every few minutes till the cream is frozen quite hard; then remove the paddle. Return the cover and let the cream stand ten minutes longer in the ice. As the ice sinks in the tub from melting fill it up again with a fresh supply. When the cream has stood ten minutes after removing the paddle take an ice-cream form, fill it and pack it tight with the frozen cream. Put the cover of the form on tightly. Paste a strip of buttered paper round the edge of the cover. Pack the form in chopped ice and salt and stand it in a cold place for two hours. When ready to serve take the form from the ice, rinse it off with cold water, remove the paper and wipe the form dry with a very hot dish towel. Take off the cover and turn the form upside down on the dish on which the cream is to be served. Take hold of the form with two thickly folded hot towels, and in a minute lift the form up and the frozen cream will come out perfect.

STRAWBERRY PRESERVES.

Weigh one pound of granulated sugar to a pound of fruit. Put the sugar into a preserving kettle with just enough water to prevent it sticking to the bottom of the kettle. Boil the sugar slowly to a thick syrup. Skim off all scum as it rises to the top. When the syrup is thick and clear drop into it as many strawberries as will cover the top of the syrup without crowding them. Let them boil twenty minutes. Skim the berries out carefully so as not to break them, and put them into glass jars or stone crocks. Repeat this process till all the berries are cooked. Then let the syrup boil half an hour and pour it over the berries through a very fine strainer. Strawberries preserved in this way will keep for years. It is not necessary to put them in air-tight glass jars. They will keep in ordinary stone jars or earthen jar pots.

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